

# WorkFirst Reform Partnership Training

*Positive Prevention*  
*April 2006*

## **Governor Gregoire's Directive**

- Renewed sense of mission.
- Reform the program to achieve better success for parents through community partnerships to weave a tighter safety net.
- WorkFirst must improve and provide supports to help parents find jobs and keep jobs, including child care.
- Parents must participate in the program or lose support
- The state will use Government Management, Accountability and Performance (GMAP) to oversee the program's results and outcomes.

## **WorkFirst Values**

- Work is the best avenue to break the cycle of poverty for families.
- Parents have a responsibility to take care of and provide for their children.
- The community, with the support of the state, has a responsibility to help low-income families.
- Every citizen in the state has the responsibility for the safety of our children.
- We all must be accountable in carrying out our parts of the program if we are to achieve success.

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## **Overview**

When a family applies for TANF, the department will conduct a thorough screening process to determine if the family has potential income or other resources that would reduce or eliminate their need for TANF. The purpose is not to "prevent" families from receiving TANF, but to provide support to families while they pursue alternatives to TANF.

## **Support Available**

The department will process the application for Basic Food and medical assistance as quickly as possible.

If the parent will get income from another source (such as Unemployment Insurance (UI), child support, or from a job), but that income won't start immediately, the department can authorize Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA) to help the parent pay expenses until the income starts. DCA can be authorized one time during a 12-month period and the amount can be up to \$1500. The parent agrees that if they come on TANF during the 12-month DCA period, they will repay a proportionate share of the DCA amount. DCA provides an effective alternative to TANF.

When the parent has a job, the department can also set up Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) which, after a co-payment, will pay child care expenses while the parent works.

## **Strategies**

Working with the parent to find alternatives to TANF will require an in-depth interview early in the TANF application process. In the interview, the staff person can find out specific information about possible sources of income for the family.

The department can access the Support Enforcement Management System (SEMS) to get information about child support income. The department can also make a referral for non-assistance child support for those parents who do not pursue TANF.

The department will also refer parents to apply for Unemployment Insurance when their work history makes a referral appropriate.

The key to helping parents find alternatives to TANF is to have a thorough discussion with them about options and possibilities. Helping the parent see that there are better alternatives than TANF (such as work, UI, or child support) will give the parent the information to make the best choice for their family. The department can provide the support needed by the family while they wait for an alternative source of income, with the result that the family is better off financially.